



CENTRAL VALLEY RURAL CRIME PREVENTION PROGRAM

Protecting California's Agriculture in an Era of Crime, Terrorism and Emerging Diseases





Central Valley Rural Crime Prevention Program

QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE



The state of California is our nation's #1 producer of agricultural products, valued at \$28 Billion. California's agricultural industry contributes over \$100 Billion to the US economy. The eight counties that comprise the Central Valley Rural Crime Prevention Program contribute 60% of our state's total agricultural valuation making our valley the richest agricultural producing region in the world.

The Central Valley Rural Crime Program is hailed by law enforcement officials across the nation as the national model for addressing agricultural crime. Great strides have been made in stemming the increasing tide of agricultural crime but the full potential of this nationally unique program is yet to be reached. As one of the only crime programs directed at rural areas, the **CVRCP Program** exists not as a grant project but as a major shift in awareness and action by utilizing crime data analysis, advanced technologies in detection, evidence gathering, communications, and human networking.

Program Mission Prevent agricultural crime and protect California agriculture through the integration of law enforcement, agricultural commissioners and prosecution.

Participating Counties Kern, Tulare, Kings, Fresno, Madera, Merced, Stanislaus and San Joaquin Counties

Participating Agencies Sheriff's Departments, Agricultural Commissioners and District Attorney Offices in each of the participating counties operating in integrated agricultural crime units composed of Sheriff detectives, Ag inspectors, DA investigators and prosecutors

National Model The **Central Valley Rural Crime Prevention Program** is the only state funded anti-agricultural crime program in the United States. This pioneering project serves as the national model for other regions seeking to address the increasing problem of agricultural crime.

Networking and Data Systems All Ag crime units are linked via state of the art communication equipment. All units are partners in the companion, federally funded **Agricultural Crime Technology Information and Operations Network** Project and participate in the **ACTION** Ag Crime database/crime analysis system, the only system of its kind in the nation. This system enables the ag units to **share ag-related crime data** and **do crime analysis from a regional perspective**. This data also enables the Ag units to **take a proactive approach** to this type of crime by compiling historic crime data throughout the region and **addressing potential crime patterns** before they develop. All Ag crime units meet monthly to exchange information, discuss cases, trends and receive training updates. Coordinated investigations are common.

Fiscal Year 04/05 Funding \$3,341,000 distributed by formula based on agricultural valuation

Number of Cases Reported in 2004 2,879

Total Loss Valuation in 2004 \$9,676,641

Total Recovery Value in 2004 \$3,284,647

Total Number of Arrests in 2004 375

Total Number of Defendants Prosecuted and Pending Court Adjudication in 2004 312

Total Number of Convictions in 2004 256

(All statistical data provided is for the time period of 1/1/04 to 12/31/04)





THE AGRICULTURAL CRIME, TECHNOLOGY, INFORMATION & OPERATIONS NETWORK (ACTION Project)

The ACTION Project is another innovative concept to address agricultural crime spearheaded by the Tulare County District Attorney Phillip J. Cline. Congressman Bill Thomas along with a valley delegation including Cal Dooley and George Radonovich and California Senators Barbara Boxer and Dianne Feinstein provided key support and assistance in obtaining federal funding for the ACTION Project. ACTION is funded through the Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Assistance and is currently a unique nationwide model program. No other project like it exists in the world.

The focus of the ACTION Project is to use technology, multi-level/multi-model networking, and training to make law enforcement agencies much more effective in their approach to solving, preventing and prosecuting agricultural crime. ACTION uses a six-prong approach to address the issue of agricultural crime. Each component contributes to the overall success of the approach. The components that make up ACTION are as follows: 1. A Regional Vision and Structure; 2. Technology; 3. Information Sharing; 4. Vertical Investigation and Prosecution; 5. Education; and 6. Academic Evaluation.

The ACTION Project is developing alternative and innovative ways, through the use of technology, to combat agricultural crime. ACTION has developed an integrated crime data base system that is inclusive of the agricultural crime information that has occurred within the eight counties of the San Joaquin Valley Task Force and San Luis Obispo County. This database system allows the nine partnership counties to share crime loss and recovery information that has occurred within each county in "real time" over the internet. Crime analysis of this same data provides a new means of solving crimes and of preventing crimes. This system now includes agricultural crime data from the State of Florida. Initiatives are in process to add the States of Maryland and New Mexico to the network.

ACTION also provides high tech surveillance equipment and training for partnership counties to use in covert operations. When a partnership county is investigating a case, they are able to check out several different types of surveillance equipment that has been modified to be used within an agricultural environment.

ACTION is very involved with the education of agricultural crime prevention techniques. The ACTION Project has worked with the California Farm Bureau Federation to further develop the Owner Applied Number (OAN) Program which is a nationally recognized crime prevention program. The OAN is a unique number that is stamped, etched, branded or engraved into farm equipment and related tools which identifies the owner of those items. The structure of an OAN enables law enforcement agencies to pinpoint the owner of the equipment in any state and county within the United States, whether the stolen equipment is found across the country or within the same county.

ACTION continues to work with other counties within California and with other states within the U.S. by providing information and expertise regarding our Project. It is ACTION's intent to establish a national training and resource center which will benefit law enforcement agencies and the entire agricultural industry. Criminals will not be able to escape capture and punishment by crossing borders as they have in the past.

THE CENTRAL VALLEY RURAL CRIME PREVENTION PROGRAM

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In 1995, Tulare County District Attorney Phil Cline wrote the proposal to develop the Rural Crime Prevention Demonstration Project which was carried by Assemblymember Chuck Poochigian through the California Legislature. The Demonstration Project pioneered by Tulare County District Attorney Phil Cline and Tulare County Sheriff Bill Wittman, demonstrated significant effectiveness in combating agricultural crime. Such success resulted in the transition from single-county demonstration status to full implementation with two expansions. The 1999 expansion added the counties of Merced, San Joaquin and Stanislaus to Fresno, Kings, Kern, Madera, with Tulare County as the model program for the state. This "best practice" has been adopted by law enforcement agencies in Florida and a number of California Counties are seeking implementation in their areas.

The Central Valley Rural Crime Prevention Program operating as the San Joaquin Valley Rural Crime Task Force is made up of dedicated and specialized agricultural crime units from the counties' District Attorney's Offices and Sheriff's Departments with assistance from the Agricultural Commissioners Offices. The task force meets on a monthly basis to share crime information and work together as an interactive team to develop problem solving and crime control techniques. Collaboration frequently results in joint operations and coordinated investigations. The task force is also involved in a scientific approach to investigating agricultural crime, collecting empirical data on the frequency and the dollar amount of rural crime and losses, and educating the public as well as the agricultural industry regarding the importance of crime prevention. The collection of data serves both as a powerful crime solving tool and potentially an even more powerful crime prevention resource. Without the CVRCP Program, the collection of data would cease thus truncating one of the most sought after features of the program.

Since 2002, the first year systematic statistics were required, the San Joaquin Valley Rural Crime Task Force has had reported losses of farm equipment, chemicals, livestock and other agriculturally related items in excess **\$27 million** and has recovered over **\$9.5 million**. The recovery rate is in excess of 35% which is well over double the average for general property crimes in the state of California. This success can be directly connected to the efforts of the San Joaquin Valley Rural Crime Task Force, their close partnership with the federally funded ACTION Project and their collaborative relationships with other law enforcement agencies such as the California Highway Patrol, border patrol, the CDFA, and the Attorney General's Office to maximize their effectiveness. In 2004, funding level was \$3.34 million. Recoveries totaled \$3.28 million. Unfortunately, losses were \$9.6 million thus underscoring the great need for this program.

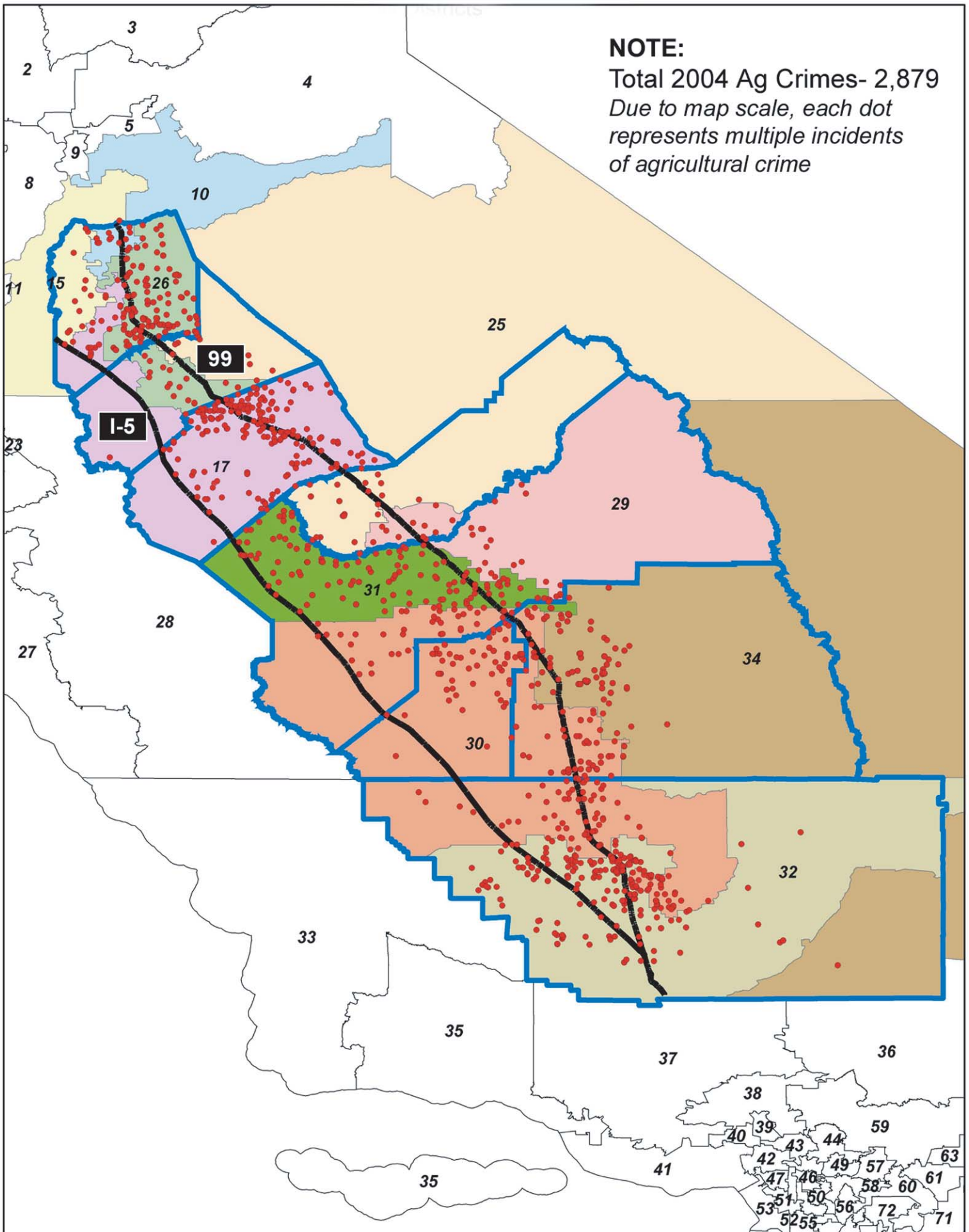
The coordination, collaboration and networking have paid great dividends in combating agricultural crime. In an era of terrorism and emerging diseases, this same Multi-County Partnership holds great potential for protecting California agriculture from foreign and domestic enemies who would destroy our most significant industry.



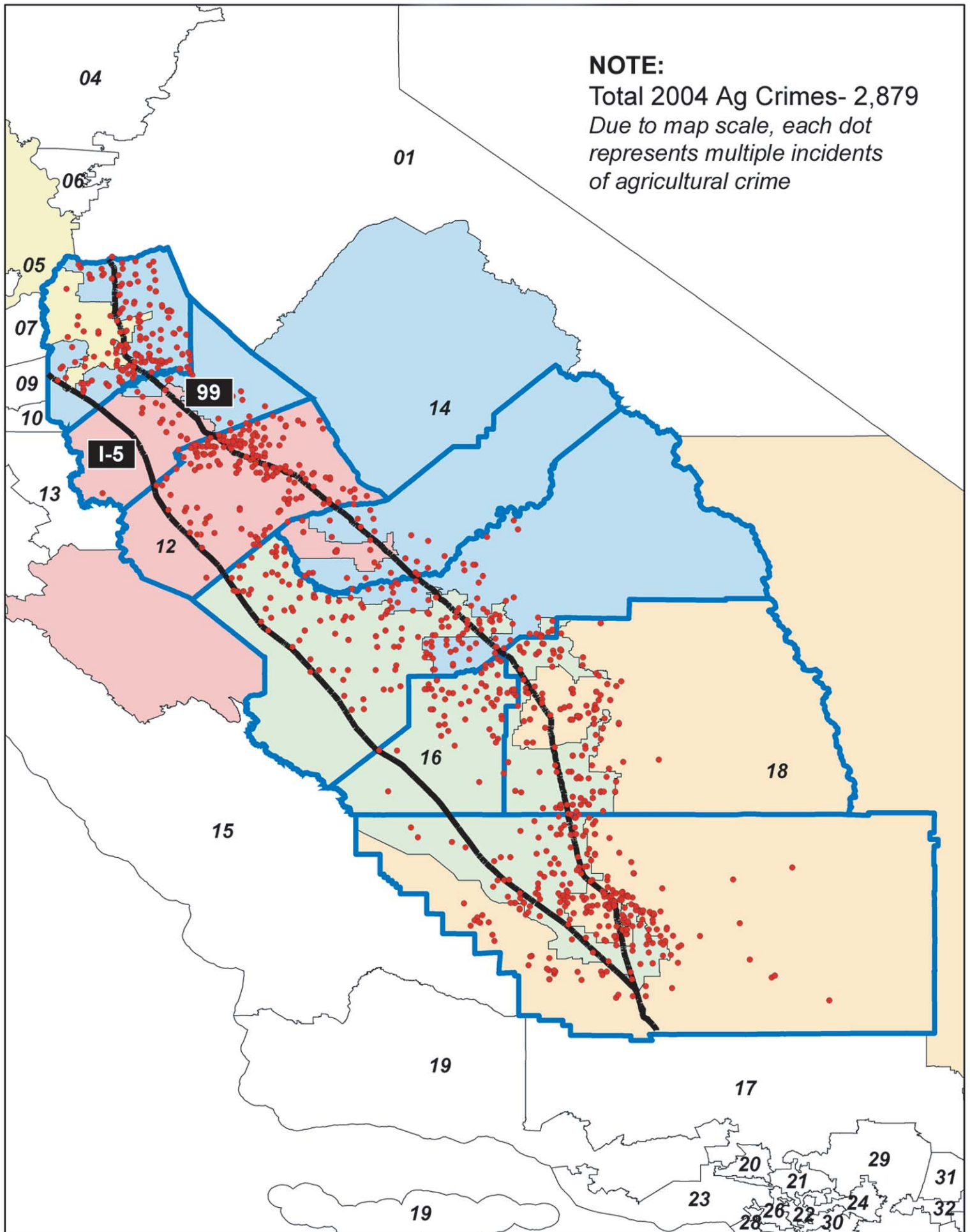
Agricultural Crimes 2004
Assembly Districts

NOTE:

Total 2004 Ag Crimes- 2,879
Due to map scale, each dot
represents multiple incidents
of agricultural crime



Agricultural Crimes 2004
Senate Districts





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Phil - An example of why coordinated ag law enforcement, such as the Rural Crime Program, is necessary along with the deployment of high tech tools from the ACTION Project!

Thieves are finding artichokes a tasty target

By Herbert A. Sample -- Bee San Francisco Bureau

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CASTROVILLE - Artichokes make up the economic lifeblood and character of this tiny Monterey County town, which bills itself the "Artichoke Center of the World."

So when thieves started swiping the green, softball-size "vegetables" by moonlight at an alarming rate in recent months, farmers grew anxious.

Now they're hopping mad to the point of considering hiring private guards to watch over thousands of acres of artichoke fields - and even carrying guns themselves.

"For the first time here, we feel we have been violated to the point where we are going to have to go out and add additional costs to our production and look for security, and lift the price," said Dale Huss, a vice president at Ocean Mist Farms.

The thieves "know what they are doing out there," said Mike Scattini, part-owner of the Luis A. Scattini & Sons farm. "You can tell that they have just clear-cut, basically, an area of artichokes."

Small-scale theft of artichokes - or any agricultural commodity - is a fact of life for farmers. It is not unusual, growers say, to see drivers transiting the area on Highway 1 or Highway 156 and stopping briefly to help themselves to a couple of artichokes - which, technically, are not vegetables but thistle flower buds that have not bloomed.

But in recent months, crop yields have fallen because of a bad spate of weather last year, Huss said. That drove the retail price up by \$1 or more per artichoke, which apparently led organized bandits to cast an eye on about 6,000 acres of unguarded, unfenced fields.

Huss and Scattini said they have discovered large duffel bags and bins of expertly harvested artichokes laying on the edge of fields, apparently waiting for the thieves to return to haul them away. They've also found binoculars and flashlights, and, of course, fields emptied of ripe 'chokes.

"When you start seeing large sacks of artichokes, plastic tubs of artichokes, being left in corners of fields," Huss said, "somebody's really into this deal big time. ... You take six sacks of artichokes, you're looking at several hundred dollars of product."

How much has been pilfered is hard to know, the farmers say, because they don't know how many artichokes were in their fields to start with. But judging from what evidence they've seen, Huss estimated the loss in the tens of thousands of dollars.

That may not seem like much, but to farmers operating on small margins, that is no pocket change, Huss said, noting that it costs \$4,500 to grow one acre of artichoke plants, which can produce about 15,000 'chokes.

Further, the thefts create a vicious circle. With substantial numbers of artichokes being stolen, there are fewer for the growers to sell to markets, which drives up prices. That, in turn, makes the artichokes more valuable to thieves.

The farmers' frustrations also are aimed at the Monterey County Sheriff's Department, which, hit by budget cuts, lacks the manpower to aggressively protect the fields.

"If I could afford to put a deputy in every field to watch, we'd need 100 deputies," said Sheriff's Cmdr. Alan Wheelus. "We don't even have that many" on patrol duty.

Moreover, Wheelus said his statistics show no rise in crop thefts because farmers infrequently report the crimes. The farmers say they can't wait hours for deputies to arrive to take a report.

Farm crime is a growing statewide phenomenon, according to the Agricultural Crime Technology Information and Operations Network, which maintains a database of the misdeeds committed in San Luis Obispo and eight Central Valley counties.

"It's a big problem and it's getting bigger," said William Yoshimoto, the group's project director.

In recent months, for example, the network's Web site issued warnings about the theft of beehives, wind machines, pomegranates and walnut burls - tree stumps and roots that are prized by furniture makers and high-end car manufacturers for their ornate patterns.

"As the economy goes up and down, of course criminals are going to look for opportunities," Yoshimoto said. "Farms are easy targets."

Scattini, who heads the state Artichoke Advisory Board, said growers in the Castroville area also are suffering from increased theft and vandalism of expensive farm tractors, pumps, trailers, fuel and other items.

So the aggravation level is getting to the point where farmers are contemplating carrying weapons, he added.

"It's getting there not only from a (standpoint of) protecting your equipment (and) your livelihood, but protection for yourself," Scattini said.

But Huss is confident either the farmers or the police will eventually stem the crime wave.

"It's gotten so easy for them to steal that they're flagrant and they're getting stupid," he said. "We're going to get those guys."

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